Evaluating Education in Europe

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What I am doing today

❖ 5 Sections
❖ the discourse of school evaluation
❖ the critical ontology of the present
❖ the archaeological method
❖ the archaeological analysis of the discursive regularities on school evaluation in Europe: some provisional reflections on the epistemic level
❖ some epistemological ruptures to think school evaluation ‘otherwise’
School Evaluation as a widespread approach across Europe

School evaluation is a widespread approach used in quality assurance across Europe. In 26 countries, both external and internal evaluation of schools is carried out (Eurydice, 2015, p. 7).

A related ethico-political frame

At a time when Europe has made reviving economic growth its top political priority, as spelt out by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in his political guidelines, attention is focused in an unprecedented way on education systems – and rightly so: Enhancing the quality of education is central to our efforts to restore long-term economic growth and job creation in Europe. [...] Quality, however, needs to be continuously monitored and improved, which calls for effective quality assurance systems covering all education levels (Eurydice, 2015, p. 3).

We need to foster a culture that strives to constantly improve the quality of teaching and learning. Member States are encouraged to develop and promote such a culture, to ensure transparency of quality assessment outcomes – a process the European Commission is committed to strengthening by promoting mutual learning in the field (Eurydice, 2015, p. 3).
A multiscalar transnational policymake
The double challenge of the EU Commission

[We need to address a] double challenge: to prioritise public investment in the education and training sector, and to find more efficient ways of deploying available financial resources which might call for structural reform in particular education systems. The main lever for increasing the efficiency of investment in education and training is to enhance the quality of provision and to focus on prevention of educational failure. Increasingly, Member States are developing models of cost-sharing between different partners in the educational process – the state, businesses and individuals, foundations and alumni – with public investment helping to leverage private sector match-funding (EU Commission, 2012, p. 12).
Quality assurance in education can be understood as policies, procedures, and practices that are designed to achieve, maintain or enhance quality in specific areas, and that rely on an evaluation process. By ‘evaluation’, we understand a general process of systematic and critical analysis of a defined subject that includes the collection of relevant data and leads to judgements and/or recommendations for improvement. The evaluation can focus on various subjects: schools, school heads, teachers and other educational staff, programmes, local authorities, or the performance of the whole education system (Eurydice, 2015, p. 13).
The OECD holistic approach

Figure 3.1 Main features of the overall evaluation and assessment framework
The UNESCO IIEP Improve Learning Model

Monitor learning

- Indicators of Learning & Quality
- Learning Assessments
- Other Monitoring Tools
- Developing a Monitoring Framework
- Using Learning & Quality Data

IIEP learning portal
School Autonomy and Accountability

SABER-School Autonomy and Accountability (SAA) documents and analyzes school-based management policies aimed at increasing autonomy and accountability at the school level and within the education system, in both developing and developed countries. By deepening school autonomy and accountability, school systems can redefine incentives structure to create better conditions for teaching and learning. Autonomy and accountability do not generate incentives in isolation; they are interlinked with the assessment of teachers and learning at the school, with the use of information, and the role of school councils. Such interconnections are critical in improving the education system as a whole, which is at the core of SABER's approach.
General Education System Quality Analysis/Diagnosis Framework (GEQAF)

International, regional and national assessments of learning outcomes testify to the poor quality of education in many countries around the world. Both developed and developing countries are aware of the quality crisis and its development consequences. Most education reform programs therefore include education quality improvement and the enhancement of equity among the key strategic objectives.

Despite all the efforts, the education quality challenge persists, and the EFA quality goals are dauntingly off track. One of the major obstacles is the lack of tools for conducting systemic analyses of critical constraints hampering the achievement of education quality goals.

Therefore, UNESCO, in collaboration with its Member States, developed the General Education Quality Analysis/Diagnosis Framework (GEQAF).
Education policy-makers and practitioners want to know which policies and practices can best achieve their goals. But research that can inform evidence-based policy often requires complex methods to distinguish causation from accidental association. Avoiding econometric jargon and technical detail, this paper explains the main idea and intuition of leading empirical strategies devised to identify causal impacts and illustrates their use with real-world examples. It covers six evaluation methods: controlled experiments, lotteries of oversubscribed programs, instrumental variables, regression discontinuities, differences-indifferences, and panel-data techniques.
## Models of organizational effectiveness

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<td><strong>to external constituents</strong></td>
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Source: Scheerens and Creemers, 1989, pp. 691 and 696

Scheerens and Demeuse (2005, p. 374 and 382) identify in the micro-economic theory and public choice theory, cybernetics and theories on learning organisations and the concept of autopoiesis originated from biology three of the basic theoretical strands influencing school effectiveness research and school improvement models.

[They continue arguing how] with respect to school improvement and school effectiveness, the perspective of autopoiesis can be seen as a basis for explaining resistance to change and less “intrinsic” interest for enhancing effectiveness. It could also be seen as a philosophy that underlines the importance of available concepts and cultural preferences of key actors enforcing the status quo in organisations, which defy “easy” transformations. [...] Autopoiesis offers a more evolutionary perspective than rational planning.
Program Evaluation

- Evaluation determines the **merit, worth, or value of things**. The evaluation process identifies relevant **values or standards** that apply to what is being evaluated, performs **empirical investigation** using techniques from the **social sciences**, and then integrates conclusions with the standards into an overall evaluation or set of evaluations (Scriven, 1991).

- Evaluation is the **systematic and objective determination of the worth or merit of an object**. Merit: The excellence of an object as assessed by its **intrinsic qualities** or performance. Worth: The value of an object in **relationship to a purpose**. (Joint Committee, 1994: 205, 207 and 210).

- [...] evaluation is judging the merit or worth of an entity. This, in fact, is a statement of the goal of evaluation. The goal is to “value” in a systematic way. This valuing consists of two aspects. As you have seen, a part of judging is the determination of the merit—the **intrinsic** value of the entity being studied. [...] there are also **extrinsic** aspects to be considered. [...] Thus we seek to value or evaluate by considering both **merit and worth** (Alkin, 2011: 9-10).
Figure 1. Key Components of the CIPP Evaluation Model and Associated Relationships with Programs
My aim today

- What I want to do today is to show you the distinctiveness, which means the potential and, of course, the limits of a specific theoretical gaze on such a phenomenon. In using the word gaze, I refer here both to an analytics, a set of interrelated categories through which to look, performatively, at a specific dimension of such a phenomenon, and to an intimately related research ethic.

- Such a gaze is constructed through a double movement. First, the framing of the issues of school evaluation within the wider problematic of government and the adoption of a governmentality perspective. Second, the focusing on a specific dimension of government, the epistemic dimension.
[...] an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them [de leur franchissement possible] (Foucault, What is Enlightenment, 1997, p. 319).
Framing school evaluation as a governmental practice

* Educational evaluation is treated as a form of knowledge and a variety of related techniques that play a central role in the government of education as the ‘conduct of conduct’. Such a perspective adopts the following general definition of government as:

  * any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seek to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes (Dean, 2010, p. 18).
| The lenses of governmentality and the problematisation of the educational present | Four interrelated axes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Episteme** | **Forms of rationality** | **Techniques and technologies** | **Identities and agencies** |
| **Fields of visibility** | By what kind of light a field of visibility illuminates and defines certain objects? | What forms of thought, knowledge, expertise, strategies, means of calculation are employed in the practices of governing? | By what means, mechanisms, procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques, technologies and vocabularies is authority constituted and governing accomplished? | What forms of person, self and identity are presupposed by different practices of government? |
| **The analytics of government** | With what shadows and darkness it obscures and hides others? | How does thought seek to transform these practices? | | |
| A materialist analysis of practices of government as assembling processes that involve multiple and heterogeneous elements, that varies from routines, technologies, ways of doing things and agencies to theories, programmes, knowledge and expertise | How are visually and spatially organized the diagrams of power and authority of the regime of government in focus? | How do these practices generate a specific regime of truth? | | |
| | How does thought attempt to render specific issues, domains and problems governable? | | | |

Source: Grimaldi and Barzanò, 2014; adapted from Dean, 2010.
The archaeological analysis in the wider framework of governmentality

❖ My proposal is to consider the archaeological analysis of the discourse of school evaluation in Europe as part of a wider attempt to address the question of our educational present and the ways we, as educational subjects, are governed and try to govern ourselves and the others.

❖ That is… to focus on school evaluation as a heterogeneous body of knowledge that is co-implicated in the definition of means of calculation, governing authorities and techniques employed in the governing of education and in the constitution of the entities to be governed, the aims to be pursued and the outcomes and consequences.
The archaeological analysis in the wider framework of governmentality

the **WHAT** of government

- **ontology**
  - what government seeks to act upon
  - the governed or ethical substance

the **HOW** of government

- **ascetics**
  - the techniques for the government of the ethical substance

the **WHY** of government

- **teleology**
  - why do we govern or are governed in this way? What are the ends/goals sought, what do we hope to become and what world do we hope to create?
  - the telos of government

the **WHO** of government

- **deontology**
  - who are the subjects when they are governed (and govern themselves and others) in such a manner?
  - the governable subjects
Archeology as a form of inquiry

I suppose that we have agreed to undertake these long inquiries into the system of emergence of objects, the system of the appearance and distribution of enunciative modes, the system of the placing and dispersion of concepts, the system of the deployment of strategic choices. I suppose that we are willing to construct such abstract, problematic unities, instead of welcoming those that presented themselves as being more or less perceptually familiar, if not as self-evident realities (Foucault, 2002, p. 89).
What is a discourse?

[...] instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe that I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements; and have I not allowed this same word ‘discourse’, which should have served as a boundary around the term ‘statement’, to vary as I shifted my analysis or its point of application, as the statement itself faded from view? (Foucault, 2002, p. 89).
The statement

The statement is not therefore a structure [...]; it is a function of existence that properly belongs to signs and on the basis of which one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they ‘make sense’, according to what rule they follow one another or are juxtaposed, of what they are the sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation (oral or written).

[...]

it is not in itself a unit, but a function that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space. It is this function that we must now describe as such, that is, in its actual practice, its conditions, the rules that govern it, and the field in which it operates (Foucault, 2002, p. 97-98).
The statement

[The statement] is linked rather to a ‘referential’ that is made up not of ‘things’, ‘facts’, ‘realities’, or ‘beings’, but of laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated, or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it. The referential of the statement forms the place, the condition, the field of emergence, the authority to differentiate between individuals or objects, states of things and relations that are brought into play by the statement itself; it defines the possibilities of appearance and delimitation of that which gives meaning to the sentence, a value as truth to the proposition. It is this group that characterizes the enunciative level of the formulation, in contrast to its grammatical and logical levels: through the relation with these various domains of possibility the statement makes of a syntagma, or a series of symbols, a sentence to which one may or may not ascribe a meaning, a proposition that may or may not be accorded a value as truth (Foucault, 2002, p. 103).
## The archaeological analytical grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The formation of</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>How</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objects</strong></td>
<td>To identify the rules of formation from which the appearance of specific objects and the possibilities of juxtaposition and/or succession between different objects depend</td>
<td>To explore the set of relations between surfaces of emergence, authorities of delimitation, and grids of specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enunciative modalities</strong></td>
<td>To explore how discourses produce subjectivities and subject-positions</td>
<td>• identification of those subjects who have the authority to use a specific language • analysis of subjects regulative and traditional statute • analysis of institutional positions from which subjects speak the discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concepts</strong></td>
<td>To describe the organization of the field of statements in which concepts emerge and circulate</td>
<td>• forms of succession • forms of coexistence (presence, concomitance, memory) • procedures of intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies</strong></td>
<td>To analyze the ‘actualizations’ of discursive possibilities, i.e. wider strategies as systematically different ways of treating objects, displace enunciative modalities and manipulate concepts</td>
<td>To analyze the relation between the rules of formation internal to a specific discourse and the processes of appropriation of discourse by specific categories of actors who are entitled to speak about its objects and concepts, who access its field of memory, who are considered able to understand and translate the elements of discourse into decisions, institutions and practices</td>
</tr>
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Analysing the formation of concepts

The analytical strategy proposed by Foucault is the following:

a) to describe a conceptual network on the basis of the intrinsic regularities of the discursive practice;

b) to reconstruct the grid of conceptual compatibilities and incompatibilities;

c) to relate the emerging conceptual network to the distinctive rules of formation of a discursive practice.
The case of school evaluation in Europe

(a work in progress…)
The state of the art - Current trends

School evaluation within the continuum between market- and government-based accountability (publicity and choice)

- [...] at one end of the spectrum those systems that make schools accountable to the public or, to use a term borrowed from economics, to the market, and at the other end of the spectrum those for which the state, or the relevant public authority, is responsible for the quality of education and must therefore ensure that schools deliver to established standards. Market-based accountability 'provide(s) parents with greater choice in the schools their children attend' (Harris & Herrington 2006, p. 221) and triggers market-like dynamics where schools have to perform and compete for students both on the variety of offer and its quality. Government-based accountability delegates the management of tools that can impact on the performance of schools to the responsible authority. These tools consist of incentives, sanctions, allocation of funds depending on socio-economic indicators, and so on (Eurydice, 2015, p. 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market-based</th>
<th>Along the continuum</th>
<th>Government-based</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (Flemish Community), Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland)</td>
<td>Estonia, Poland, Portugal, and Iceland), Belgium (French Community), Italy, Latvia, Spain</td>
<td>France, Cyprus, Slovenia, and Turkey</td>
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The state of the art - Current trends

❖ Decentralisation and School Autonomy as supporting the widespread of school evaluation in almost all the countries

❖ The *chain*: individuating, being strategic, evaluating, improving

Several factors have supported the development of the evaluation of schools as a widespread practice for measuring and improving the quality of education across European countries. Trends towards decentralisation of education systems from the 1980s onwards, combined with the more traditional autonomy conferred to local and school levels in some other countries, resulted in local authorities and schools appearing as key actors of education policy. In a number of countries, schools are conferred with decision making responsibilities on human and resource management, as well as on the content of education provision. Sometimes, this autonomy has been combined with the responsibility of defining strategic plans for improvement and further development of education provision. Reforms increasing school autonomy have paved the way to a transfer of accountability from education authorities to individual schools (Eurydice, 2015, p. 14).
The state of the art - Current trends

❖ The combination between external and internal evaluation: external evaluators make use of internal findings

❖ In 31 education systems, schools both carry out internal evaluation and are examined by external evaluators. One widespread form of interdependence between the two processes is the use that external evaluators make of internal evaluation findings. In two thirds of the education systems where external and internal school evaluation coexist, internal evaluation findings are part of the information analysed during the preliminary phase of external evaluation. Together with other sources of information, internal evaluation findings often enable external evaluators to elaborate on the profile of the school to be visited and better focus their work. (Eurydice, 2015, p. 12).
Focuses: activities, tasks, outcomes and compliance

A procedural chain: analysis-visit-reporting

Criteria: centralized and standardised

Self-evaluation is compulsory (in 27 countries) or recommended.

All schools employ supporting measures: specialist training in internal evaluation, use of external evaluation frameworks, indicators enabling schools to compare with other schools, specific guidelines and manuals, online forums, as well as advice from external specialists, and financial support (Eurydice, 2015, p. 11).
The state of the art - Current trends

- Towards inclusive, participatory, dialogue-based and holistic approaches

Outcomes following external evaluation:

1. remedial actions;
2. disciplinary actions;
3. profile-raising actions.
My archaeological questions:
What laws of possibility and rules of existence?

❖ What is the ‘referential’ of school evaluation as a set of discursive practices/regularities? That is what are the laws of possibility, the rules of existence for the objects and subjects that are named, designated, or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it. What are the places, conditions, the field of emergence, the authorities to differentiate between individuals or objects, states of things and relations that are brought into play by these statements? And above all what is that is accorded a value as truth?

❖ Thus, I will try to define the epistemological spaces where these discursive practices find their laws of possibility and rules of existence and how these epistemological spaces can be understood as made of a set of processes of conceptual transference.

❖ Recalling the research ethic section, an important point to be made: I am not trying to discuss a hierarchical-strategic project of control, governing and subjugation. This is much more dispersed and related to how a heterogeneous ensemble of discursive regularities across diverse spaces and localities create the conditions for thinking, acting, analysing and talking about school evaluation, its subjects and objects and ends.
Schooling as a process of production - the figure of labor

Figure 1. Key Components of the CIPP Evaluation Model and Associated Relationships with Programs
Schooling as a process of production - the figure of labor

Monitor learning

- Indicators of Learning & Quality
- Learning Assessments
- Other Monitoring Tools
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IIEP learning portal
[We need to address a] double challenge: to prioritise public investment in the education and training sector, and to find more efficient ways of deploying available financial resources which might call for structural reform in particular education systems. The main lever for increasing the efficiency of investment in education and training is to enhance the quality of provision and to focus on prevention of educational failure. Increasingly, Member States are developing models of cost-sharing between different partners in the educational process – the state, businesses and individuals, foundations and alumni – with public investment helping to leverage private sector match-funding (EU Commission, 2012, p. 12).
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Education systems as Living systems

Figure 3.1 Main features of the overall evaluation and assessment framework
The anatomy of the education systems and their organs

What does SABER-School Autonomy and Accountability do?
SABER-School Autonomy and Accountability aims to catalyze and inform policy dialogue on school-based management. It does this in several ways:

1. SABER-School Autonomy and Accountability collects information on core school-based management policy areas in education systems around the world by administering a set of questionnaires to key informants and gathering both qualitative and quantitative data, validated by legal documents.

2. SABER-School Autonomy and Accountability classifies and analyzes education systems around the world according to five policy goals that are critical for enabling effective school-based management.

3. SABER-School Autonomy and Accountability provides country reports and other knowledge products that diagnose how well a country’s policies support school autonomy and accountability with a view to improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning. A goal of this effort is to identify policy areas and actions that support better alignment of managerial responsibilities at the school level, assessment of results, and use of assessments to promote accountability to increase education quality and student learning.

How does SABER-School Autonomy and Accountability help countries improve education policies and systems?

School Autonomy and Accountability

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The dream of the perfect mastery of reality: knowing, judging, orienting action and fulfilment

Evaluation determines the merit, worth, or value of things. The evaluation process identifies relevant values or standards that apply to what is being evaluated, performs empirical investigation using techniques from the social sciences, and then integrates conclusions with the standards into an overall evaluation or set of evaluations (Scriven, 1991).

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The epistemological space of school evaluation

Field of application of mathematics to the empirical sciences

Mathematical and physical sciences

Field of the formalization of thought

Field of the philosophies of life, labour, and language

Philosophical reflection

Sciences of language, life and the production
Towards more complex hybridisation(s)…

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The quadrilateral of school evaluation

Figure 3 – The quadrilateral of the discourse of evaluation

- Man’s fallibility
- The promise of fulfilment (effectiveness, improvement)
- Man as a paradoxical figure of knowledge
- (F)evaluating as enlightenment
**Concluding remarks**

**What I am reflecting on and what I think it could be interesting to develop further**

- For those who are uneasy with the current state of educational evaluation in Europe and are willing to think of a different school evaluation.

- This kind of analysis suggests that a generative terrain of reflection is the practicing of those epistemological ruptures that attempt to re-compose the quadrilateral and challenge its anthropological postulate.
Concluding remarks

- To remove people from history, it is argued, is to make the world seem deterministic and beyond the possibility of intervention. In fact, efforts to remove the actor have been viewed as reactionary [...]. Not to have a visible actor - groupings of people and individuals - in narratives of social affairs is asserted as anti-humanistic (and even anti-democratic). [...] The assumption is of a world in which salvation can be found through positing prior universal actors who will bring the good works, and in which potential is not prevented through the schemas of theorists who "decenter" the subject (Popkewitz and Brennan, 1997, p. 309).
Concluding remarks

- Interesting to study to what extent and how evaluative models and experiences can and attempt to explore the following epistemological ruptures:
  - rethinking the spatial dimension in the practice of educational evaluative research, focusing on the constructing of identities through the formation of social spaces;
  - thinking of time as a multiplicity of strands moving with an uneven flow, understanding change as ruptures or breaks and looking at continuities as conditional and relational. This implies a non-causal and non-linear mode of reasoning that abandons the objective to identify agents and factors of change that move ‘in a continuum from the past to the present and the future’. It calls to an understanding of change and progress that is strictly bounded to ‘breaking the chains of reason that bind and limit alternatives for action’;
Concluding remarks

❖ Interesting to study to what extent and how evaluative models and experiences can and attempt to explore the following epistemological ruptures:

❖ escaping from the enduring evolutionary principle that results in the centrality of the logic of comparison and the tendency to create differentiation drawing on ‘some norms of unity’ (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 25). Intensify the exploration of alternative discursive practices to construct differences that do not result in the formation of oppositional norms. This would be coupled with the attempt to position difference within a discourse that does not establish a single continuum of value, but take into account the hybridity, multiplicity and the performative effects of any form of classification and positioning (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 24).
Thanks for your attention  emiliano.grimaldi@unina.it